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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

1 Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage June 19-20 on President Chen Shui-bian's proposal to hold a referendum on the island's UN bid under the name Taiwan and the U.S. State Department's statement Monday, which opposes such an initiative; on the 2008 presidential election; on the aftermath following the detention of Eastern Multimedia Group Chairman Gary Wang Sunday; and on other local issues. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a banner headline on page two June 20 that said "Referendum on the UN Bid, the United States Opposes [It], but the DPP Will Not Flinch." With regard to AIT Chairman Raymond Burghardt's recent visit and the U.S. arms procurements budget, the "Liberty Times" carried an exclusive news story on page eight June 19 with the headline: "KMT Blocks the Budget for PACIII Missiles Again and It Even Comes up with a 'New Excuse' to Stall It; Raymond Burghardt 'Almost Falls out of the Chair' When He Hears [the Excuse]."

2 In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" analysis lashed out at AIT Chairman Burghardt for his remarks on President Chen's proposal to hold a referendum on Taiwan's UN bid. The article said Taiwan does not need to seek approval from others to hold a referendum. A separate "Liberty Times" analysis also chimed in by saying harshly that the United States is in no position to interfere with Taiwan's decision to conduct referenda. A "Liberty Times" op-ed piece urged Washington to engage in high-level meetings with Taiwan over the island's UN bid. An analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News," however, said that for President Chen, the importance of the sustainability of the DPP regime has long outranked that of the U.S.-Taiwan relations, so it is impossible for the United States to ask Chen to make concession over this issue. A separate "United Daily News" op-ed also said President Chen has long grown accustomed to Washington's oral opposition, and he will get what he wants eventually after the scolding of the United States. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" urged Washington to consider carefully Taiwan's position to hold a referendum on its UN bid. End summary.

A) "Burghardt Relays Message in a High-Profile Manner; Taiwan Does Not Need to Watch Others' Expression [for Signs of Approval] for Holding Referenda"

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Tsou Jiing-wen said in an analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] (6/19):

"When compared with his attitude shown during his first visit to Taiwan in the capacity [of AIT chairman] last year, Raymond Burghardt demonstrated a very different bearing during his visit this time. He sounded very much like a 'governor-general' who has come to inspect [the island]. During his several closed-door meetings with leaders of the ruling and opposition parties, Burghardt took the initiative in mentioning the referenda, and without too many meaningless remarks, Burghardt made the U.S. position very clear. ...

"Burghardt said that '[O]ur attitude is very clear, and you are clearly aware of it. If you really do it, we will surely speak out, and we will not be out of reaction.' His implication was that the candidates themselves will have to assess the impact on their campaign should the United States come forth to criticize such a move! Immediately following Burghardt's remarks, A-Bian announced that he would push for a referendum on the island's 'UN bid under the name 'Taiwan' in tandem with the presidential election. [Such a move] was meant to get it straight to the Americans that 'you didn't convince me.' [Chen's] choice is perfectly accurate when it is judged against the backdrop of the triangular relationship between Washington, Beijing and Taipei over the recent years. The Americans cannot just ask Taiwan to shut up obediently without offering something in return, including a free trade agreement.

"Burghardt has made many inappropriate statements in public during his visit this time, but it is a pity that few political figures rebutted him immediately after he made them. For instance, Burghardt said he wanted to meet with the presidential candidates, and whether he would meet with President Chen was undecided yet! [Burghardt's remarks] were akin to a foreign envoy, who goes to the United States, looks down on President George W. Bush while showing more interest in meeting with the candidates of the Republican and Democratic Parties. Burghardt sounded exactly like a supervisor from a superior country when he said the Taiwan government and the two presidential candidates had better be prudent in their remarks and actions during the campaigning process.

"A-Bian remains in charge of Taiwan's policies until May 20, 2008, and there is even no room for Ma Ying-jeou and Frank Hsieh to meddle in [the policies.] It is not without reasons that Burghardt dared to disregard diplomatic decorum by behaving so rudely and making improper remarks. But A-Bian is determined to go his own way. In comparison, he is the one with a certain style and moral character.

It is indeed such a pity that both Ma and Hsieh have chosen to keep quiet and have not carried themselves with dignity!"

B) "The United States Is in No Position to Interfere with Taiwan's Holding Referenda"

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Tsou Jiing-wen said in an analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] (6/20):

"Exactly as Raymond Burghardt had previously 'warned,' the U.S. State Department has issued a statement 'not supporting' Taiwan's referendum on its UN bid. This is, without a doubt, a clear position held by the United States. But the matter is that it requires the support of the Taiwan people only, not that of the U.S. government, to conduct referenda in Taiwan. The [U.S.] statement is akin to rubbish; it is unconstructive and thus can be thrown away.

"When it comes to the engagement between nations, what weighs most should be their common interests. A country cannot possibly get any positive response from another country if it attempts to impose its unilateral interests on the latter. Over the past few years, Taiwan has constantly faced unjust treatment during its public attempts to participate in the international organizations, while under the table it has been subject to the same obligations [as other member nations]. A key factor [behind this situation] is the United States' appeasement and tolerance toward those rogues. Since the United States has failed to play the role of policeman well, 'who cares' [what it said] -- to quote a widely-used Chinese expression -- when it only blows whistles at Taiwan.

"The State Department said it does not support Taiwan's participation in the international organizations for which statehood is a requirement. Should this be the case, given the fact that national defense is more closely related to the symbol of a sovereign state, why did the United States stamp its foot when the arms procurements budget was stalled in the Legislative Yuan for a period of time? Why did it not apply the same logic to say that it 'does not support' Taiwan's military buildup? ...

"The Americans have badly estimated the situation: Washington is able to use its policies to restrain Taiwan only when the island needs to seek help from the United States in various aspects. But now that such necessity has dropped to its record low point, what does Taiwan have to fear since it has 'nothing to lose' now? The United States has never approved of it throughout the entire process when Taiwan held its first referendum in 2004. It is very unrealistic for the interlocutors that Washington sent to Taiwan to believe that they can use the one and only reason of defending Taiwan to suppress the island to act like a vegetable. ..."

C) "The United States' One China Policy Should Not Be Viewed as a Reason [for Requesting That President Chen Shui-bian Stop a Referendum on Taiwan's UN Bid]"

Professor Chen Wen-hsien at the National Chengchi University opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] (6/20):

"... Taiwan's participation in the United Nations will be more conducive for the United States to strengthen its interest in East Asia in the long run. Both the United States and Taiwan should thus hold high-level meetings about this issue. Since Washington is able to engage in dialogue with North Korea, with which it has no diplomatic ties, and the People's Republic of China, with which it did not have diplomatic ties, there is no need for it to dodge consultations with Taiwan now!"

D) "The United States Strongly Opposes [Taiwan's] Referendum on UN Bid; Bian to Challenge It More Sternly"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang noted in the "Washington Observation" column in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (6/20):

"... The real intent of Chen Shui-bian and the DPP to manipulate the [referendum] issue is to duplicate the vote-luring effect that they [successfully] achieved in 2004 when 'the referendum was bundled with the presidential election.' But what sensitive Washington has been concerned about are cross-Straits relations. That is why Washington acted hurriedly to define, via the State Department's unambiguous statement, this potential referendum as [a move that] 'appears designed to change the status quo unilaterally;' that 'would increase tensions in the Taiwan Strait;' and that 'would run counter to President Chen's repeated commitments to President Bush and the international community.' ...

"This year's situation is obviously different. The United States has, at an early stage, used the word 'opposition' to draw a red

line regarding Chen's referendum on the island's UN bid under the name 'Taiwan.' Such a move is akin to telling [Chen] that there is no room for negotiation or ambiguity. But even though Washington has shown its "hole card" in advance, it still holds expectations that Chen will come forth and settle the controversy in the end. That is why [the State Department] said 'we urge President Chen to exercise leadership by rejecting such a proposed referendum.' But for Chen, the importance of the sustainability of the DPP regime has perhaps long since outranked that of Taiwan-U.S. relations. If the whole DPP commonly believes that it is necessary to bundle the referendum with the presidential election, then the United States will be unsuccessful in asking Chen to make a concession."

E) "The United States Harshly Questions Bian, but [Is It an Attempt to] 'Suffer a Scolding to Get What You Want'?" Political commentator Wang Jung-lin opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (6/20):

"Chen Shui-bian said clearly June 18 that he hopes to hold a referendum on [Taiwan's] UN bid in tandem with the presidential election next year. But the next day, the U.S. State Department immediately mentioned Chen's name and asked him to retract such an initiative on the ground that this referendum appears designed to change the status quo and would increase tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Such oral opposition by the United States has been an old approach used many times [by Washington], and Chen has long since got accustomed to Washington's mentioning his name, as previous experience has proved that, once he gets his head past a narrow opening, his body can pass as well. As a result, who is the intended audience for this two-man comic show?

"There are two designated kinds of audience. For the United States, its audience is Beijing; as long as there is any slight commotion on Taiwan's part, almost without exception, Washington will 'scold' Taiwan to show Beijing. ... For the Chen administration, however, its audience is the Taiwan people. The purpose for Chen to design this [show of] 'bundling a referendum with the presidential election' was of course to solicit votes, and it is not necessarily related -- or it might even trigger negative consequences -- to the questions of whether Taiwan is ready to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait or whether it is able to join the UN. ..."

F) "U.S. Should Decide Where It Stands"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (6/20):

"Even after discounting the exaggeration by the mainstream pro-Kuomintang media, the call by an anonymous official of the United States State Department directed at President Chen Shui-bian to 'reject' a proposed referendum on whether Taiwan should apply to join the United Nations under the name of 'Taiwan' makes a travesty of last week's declaration by U.S. President George W. Bush in Prague that Washington 'supports the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation.' ... No official of the U.S. has any right to tell President Chen to 'reject' this referendum petition and the president himself has no right or authority to stop the current campaign. Assuming the report is correct, the Washington official, whose remarks mainly parrot a complaint made last week by the PRC's own Office of Taiwan Affairs, has an exaggerated view of the significance of this initiative.

"First, the referendum itself does not even constitute a 'change' in Taiwan's status, but, if approved, would only show to an overwhelming majority of Taiwan's citizens that the United Nations member countries will 'change' Taiwan's status of exclusion from the U.N. Second, the referendum does not directly call for a change in Taiwan's official name, but only refers to the title to be used in the U.N. More to the point, the very fact that the U.S. State Department believes Chen can stop this process reveals that the State Department either does not believe Taiwan is a democracy or simply does not understand how Taiwan's democratic political system operates. The president simply has no direct power or right to halt an ongoing petition campaign or to order the Executive Yuan or the CEC to either certify or reject the initial or secondary petitions or to schedule the timing of the referendum vote. The people who will ultimately determine the course of this referendum campaign are the citizens and eligible voters in Taiwan, who can use their free will and good judgment to decide whether to sign petitions to put the issue on the ballot or whether to vote for or against the proposal.

"For our part, we concur that Taiwan should apply to join the United Nations as 'Taiwan' and we concur that the Taiwan electorate have an opportunity to express their will on this issue in a referendum vote. We urge Washington to carefully consider its position. If the U.S. State Department upholds the principle of universality in the U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and

desires true regional stability, it should support efforts to find a method to ensure the direct representation of the 23 million people of Taiwan in the U.N. system. If Washington had done so and had not turned a blind eye to the drive by the PRC to arbitrarily change Taiwan's status quo by 'legalizing' its claim of sovereignty over Taiwan and building up military power to threaten direct annexation, there would probably have been no need for this referendum drive. Of course, there is the possibility the U.S. State Department itself believes that the authoritarian PRC regime and not the democratically elected government of Taiwan should represent the Taiwan people in the U.N. If so, we wish the U.S. State Department would publicly affirm its position that the people of Taiwan are to be seen as an 'exception' to the no longer Universal Declaration of Human Rights and also cease hypocritical prating about how Washington 'supports democracy in every nation of the world.'"

YOUNG